

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-12

INFO OCT-01 EUR-25 IO-14 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07 H-03

INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-07 PA-04 RSC-01 PRS-01 SPC-03

SS-20 USIA-15 OMB-01 ACDA-19 SAJ-01 NIC-01 DRC-01

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FM USINT BAGHDAD

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 825

INFO AMEMBASSY ANKARA

AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

AMEMBASSY TEHRAN

USMISSION USUN NEW YORK

USINT DAMASCUS

AMEMBASSY CAIRO

C O N F I D E N T I A L BAGHDAD 0136

EO 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, IZ

SUBJECT: NOMINAL AUTONOMY FOR KURDISTAN

REF: BAGHDAD 98

1. ON MARCH 3 NATIONAL FRONT COUNCIL CHAIRED BY RCC VICE CHAIRMAN SADDAM HUSSEIN ADOPTED FINAL VERSION OF AUTONOMY PROPOSAL FOR KURDISTAN. ON MARCH 9 EXTRAORDINARY SESSION OF 8TH BAATH PARTY CONFERENCE DECIDED THAT AUTONOMY WOULD BE PROCLAIMED ON MARCH 11. NATIONAL FRONT HELD MEETING WITH 665 LEADING IRAQIS TO DISCUSS DECISION ON MARCH 10.

2. DESPITE ABOVE THERE IS NO INDICATION THAT KDP HAS AGREED TO BAATH VERSION OF AUTONOMY. ON CONTRARY, KDP AT-TAAXHI HAS BEEN SILENT ALL WEEK ON AUTONOMY NEGOTIATIONS
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AND ON MARCH 10 REPORTED DECISION TO PROCLAIM AUTONOMY AS

SMALL NEWS ITEM WITHOUT COMMENT. KDP-BAATH NEGOTIATIONS REPORTEDLY BROKEN OFF LAST WEEK AND KURDISH NEGOTIATORS AND THE FOUR KURDISH MINISTERS ARE SAID TO HAVE LEFT BAGHDAD TO JOIN BARZANI. SADDAM HUSSEIN ALLEGEDLY WENT TO ERBIL TO MEET WITH BARZANI MARCH 4 IN LAST MINUTE EFFORT TO OBTAIN KDP ACCORD.

3. MEANWHILE, THERE ARE WIDESPREAD RUMORS OF BOMBING INCIDENTS IN NORTH AND WITHDRAWAL OF PESH MERGA TO MOUNTAIN STRONGHOLDS ON ORDERS FROM BARZANI. INDIAN MILATT SURI SAYS THERE HAS ALREADY BEEN ONE SERIOUS CLASH NEAR KIRKUK WHERE ARMY USED HELICOPTERS AND ARMOR AGAINST PESH MERGA. IRAQI ARMY SAID TO BE POISED THROUGHOUT NORTH READY FOR ACTION. PESH MERGA ARE ALSO REPORTEDLY BETTER ORGANIZED AND EQUIPPED THAN IN PAST AND, ACCORDING TO INDIAN MILATT, HAVE THREE REGULAR BATTALIONS.

4. COMMENT: WAR OF NERVES CONTINUES AND THERE IS NO SIGN THAT EITHER SIDE PLANNING TO MAKE CONCESSIONS. GOI EFFORTS TO SHOW POPULAR SUPPORT FOR ITS AUTONOMY PROPOSAL AND TO SPLIT KURDS HAVE BEEN UNCONVINCING THUS FAR. ALTHOUGH ARMY POISED, GOI APPEARS UNLIKELY TO ORDER FULL MILITARY OFFENSIVE AS IT DID FOUR TIMES BETWEEN 1961-69 WITHOUT LASTING RESULT BECAUSE TIME IS ON GOI SIDE, BARZANI IN DANGER OF SEEING HIS FOLLOWING DROP AWAY UNDER GOVERNMENT FINANCIAL BLANDISHMENTS AND DISINCLINATION OF DETRIBALIZED KURDS FOR RETURN TO MOUNTAIN LIFE.

5. GOI CONTINUES TO BELIEVE IRAN WISHES TO OBSTRUCT SETTLEMENT AND IN BRIEFING OF ARAB AMBASSADORS ON BORDER CLASHES FORMIN ABDUL BAQI ALLEGED IRANIANS FEARED TROUBLE FROM IRANIAN KURDS IF AUTONOMY SUCCEEDED IN IRAQ. GOI PRESUMABLY REASONS THAT AS LONG AS BARZANI CAN COUNT ON OUTSIDE SUPPORT HE WILL REFUSE TO ACCEPT CONCESSIONS DEMANDED BY GOI. FACT THAT MOST SERIOUS BORDER CLASHES IN SOME YEARS TOOK PLACE AS MARCH 11 APPROACHED HAS PERSUADED MANY OBSERVERS THAT THERE SOME BASIS FOR IRAQI ALLEGATIONS. MOST TEND TO SEE IT IN TERMS OF IRAQI-IRANIAN RIVALRY IN GULF HOWEVER, RATHER THAN IRANIAN CONCERN ABOUT THEIR OWN KURDS.

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